



needs of a wide range of rider abilities with more than 4,000 acres of public land and miles of connected singletrack.

While the trail network may appear daunting to new riders, don't worry. Several core trails, including Lupine, Blackmer, Mile Run and Larry's, serve as central and easily navigable arteries up Emerald. From these trails you can experiment by veering off onto a number of side loops en route to the Quarry overlook. Offshoot loops like Blair Witch, Quarry Mountain, MGM, Root Canal and Eye-to-Eye offer miles of tacky, singletrack that wend through wildflower-filled meadows and groves of aspen, shrub oak and pine. For longer rides, you can also tie in a loop on the Ridge and Beall trails off the backside of Emerald.

Season: Late May through October

Trail rating: More difficult (fair amount of climbing)

Total mileage: Depends on your route. Lupine, Blair Witch, Quarry Mountain, Root Canal, Stairway to Heaven and MGM clocks in at 9.8 miles.

Know before you go: Just remember that what goes up gets to come down. The trails can get crowded during lunch and after work, so ride with respect for other users, including those on horseback and hikers. A bell can come in handy. Bottom line? It's a mountain biking Mecca.

Trailheads and Parking

Three main trailheads serve the numerous riding options on Emerald Mountain. Each can be linked to miles of additional trails, which all generally connect back to the core trails listed. The Emerald Mountain trail system has ample parking at the stables, at Howelsen Lodge and at Backmer Drive. Parking gets tight during Triple Crown baseball and softball events, which occur throughout the summer, so do like the locals do and ride from your accommodations as a nice warm up.

Lupine Trailhead: For a local favorite try the twisty Lupine trail, which is accessed, along with Bluff Loops, via the trailhead next to the stables and restrooms behind the Rodeo grounds.

Mile Run Trailhead: A second option is Mile Run. A ski run during the winter season, this wide trail provides a moderate grade to access the higher riding options. The trailhead sign is located by the winter tubing building between the white pavilion and northernmost baseball field at the base of Howelsen Hill. Veer right along the base of the Nordic ski jumps. The trail winds northwest and then cuts behind Howelsen Hill.

Blackmer Trailhead: Blackmer, which doubles as an emergency access road, provides the most forgiving riding option to the Quarry overlook (but you'll still learn to count the three major switchbacks). Head down the bike path or Lincoln Avenue and take a left at 13th Street at the Bud Werner Memorial Library. Follow 13th over the bridge and take your first left on Gilpin Street (or look for a short-cut singletrack heading up to your left). Then take a left onto Saratoga Avenue and a final quick right onto Routt Street, which ends at a parking area and the trailhead.

Note: For details see Trails illustrated map #118 Steamboat Springs/Rabbit Ears, which includes 38 total miles on Howelsen/Emerald. And don't forget to check out the City Skills Park and BMX course at the base of Howelsen Hill, built and maintained by the Steamboat Springs Winter Sports Club.